

[C. O. Edwards]

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Gauthier. Sheldon F.

Rangelore.

Tarrant Co., Dist., #7

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C.O. Edwards, 86, living at 556 Summit Ave, Fort Worth, Texas, was born Jan 29, 1851 in Tarrant Co, Texas, at his father's, L.J. Edwards, farm located west of the city of Fort Worth.

L.J. Edwards started to establish a herd of cattle prior to the Civil War and at the commencement of the war had a herd of 500 cattle.

The herd was drove to the mouth of the Little Wichita River, North of Seymour, Baylor Co, Texas, in 1860. Calvin Smith had charge of the herd and there established a ranch. Compensation for his work was a precentage of the herd's increase.

After the Civil war terminated, L.J. Edwards gave his son, C.O. Edwards, 500 cattle, which the son drove to Lynn Co, Texas, and there established a ranch. From that start he increased the number of his cattle until, at one time, he owned 50,000 head and since has been continuously in the cattle business.

His story of range life follows:

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"My place of birth was Tarrant Co, Texas, west of Fort Worth, on a farm owned by my father, L. J. Edwards. The date of my birth is Jan 29, 1851, which makes my age 86.

"My entire life has been devoted to the cattle industry. My father began his career in the cattle business prior to the Civil War. He started with a herd of about 500 and adopted 'LED' as his brand.

"Father entered into an agreement with Calvin Smith, in 1860, that agreement provided that Smith would take charge of the herd and receive a percentage of the increase for his pay.

"Smith drove the herd to the mouth of the Little Wichita River and located a ranch North of Seymour, in Baylor Co. That arrangement continued for a period of five years, which covered the duration of the Civil War. 2 "There was not much sale for cattle after the war began and, also, for a time after the war ceased. Therefore, at the end of five years we had a tremendous increase. In spite of strays, Indians and other troubles the 500 head had increased to about 4000. The Indians helped themselves to our cattle, for use as food, as they desired to. We found cattle with our brand as far South as Tarrant Co. It is difficult to estimate the number of cattle we would have had, if none got away.

"At the conclusion of the five period with Smith, father turned over to me 1,000 head of cattle and I began my career in the cattle industry, and since that time I have never been out of it. I have had herds that numbered 50,000. In fact, there were times that I did [no?] know how many cattle were carrying my brand.

"When father gave me the herd I employed Tom Preston as my range boss, at a salary of \$50. per month. He hired a crew, paying wages of around \$25. per month, and they drove that herd to Lynn Co, that was in 1868.

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"I never did any range work myself. I have always have left the matter of managing the ranch entirely up to my ranch foreman. I always tried to employ a dependable man as my ranch foreman, in that I was not always successful, but on the whole I did quite well.

"Tom Preston was one of the best ranch foreman I ever had working for me. In face of all the difficulties that the cattle men were compeled to meet during several years following 3 the close of the Civil War, Preston handled my cattle and ranch matters and kept from going under. Under his management the herd [increased?] until the number if cattle carrying my brand was estimated to be above 50,000.

"I used the 'T-' brand and a good number of my cattle had their brand changed. The precentage of [oss?] is a matter of conjecture, but we discovered cattle in many instances, where the 'T-' had been changed to 'T-B' and 'T-A! In fact, the brand was changed to anything one [nay?] imagine. In one case we found it changed to 'THT'.

"Discussing the question of brand changes with friends, it has often been suggested to me that I change my brand so that it would be more difficult to alter. I often thought about doing so, but never could figure out a brand that could not be worked into some other mark.

"Charly Goodnight, Custer and Atkins, Bill Harris and others, all of whom run cattle in that section, tried to out figure the brand burner, but failed.

"The rustler would gather cattle and get a herd together and then drive it into New Mexico, where they had a market.

"The cattle rustler was one of our big problems and still is.

"In the early days the cattlemen delt rough with the thief. Many of them were hung to a limb, or shot. But, that did stop the traffic in cattle rustling.

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"There was a period during the 70's then the price of beef dropped so low that it did not pay to drive a herd to market. 4 Discussing the matter of price with my foreman I said to him, 'well, we will get a rest from watching rustlers, because it [wil?] not be a paying proposition for them'. But, I was mistaken, they never stopped. Many critter was rustled for its hide and tallow, which was salable.

"It was trouble enough to deal with the rustlers, but when one hired a rustler and was paying the fellow to look after the herd, and have that fellow help the rustlers, that was a bitter pill to take.

"After Tom Preston's time as my [foreman?], I had several experiences with rustler formens. I shall not mention any names, for obvious reasons, but actual actually I have had foremans that rustled my cattle and were [confrerates?] of rustlers.

"I received word from friends, in each instance, that I had better check up on my foreman. I acted upon the information and found the advice given each time to be correct.

"Cattle rustling became a business with many men after the close of the Civil War and the cattlemen were partly at fault for developing the [practic?]. It started with paying the waddies bonus for branding mavericks.

"During the Civil War many of the herds were neglected, due to the scarcity of help and because of the poor market. Many ranchers considered it a wast of mony to roundup and brand calves. In a few years were produced thousands of cattle, in the Southwest, which were running the range with no brand.

"It was impossible to determine the owner of the mavericks and one person had as much right to the animals as another. For 5 a time no one gave any attention to the mavericks.

"The it was learned that cattled could be driven over a long way without detremental effect on the animal, if handled correctly. The counrty north of us was, by nature, provided with

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adequate grass and water, and a herd could be drifted through the country at a speed of about seven miles per day. Drifting the cattle at the speed would allow the animals to feed properly and they would arrive at the market, that existed in Kansas, in good flesh. Then driving started and thousands [o?] cattle were drifted north. That created a demand and fair prices. In turn the demand caused the cattlemen to look after the mavericks.

“A sort of a gentlemen's agreement was made, whereby it was understood that the mavericks running on a range with a herd belong to that herd, therefore, it was proper for the owner of the herd to brand such mavericks.

“Some of the ranchmen conceived the idea of paying their help a bonus for branding mavericks. That idea started a free-for-all branding race and the range division was forgotten.

“Some of the far sighted waddies saw that if he could go branding for his employer, he could do the same for himself. Many waddies adopted a brand and had it registered as a brand of their own. They branded mavericks with which they started a herd of their own.

“In a little while after the cowhands began to brand maverick for himself, the large ranchers began to vision a crowded range and competition that would ruin the cattle business. They decided to check the rapid development of small ranches and the first move toward that end was to stop paying bonuses to the cowhands, also, demanded that the help continue mavericks, but with the employers brand. This move had the opposite effect, instead of stopping the branding of mavericks, except as the cattlemen ordered, it caused a greater disregard for range rights.

“The little fellow felt that the big ranchers were trying to “Hog” the range. Therefore, the little fellows and the cowhands, that was out from the bonus, began to brand mavericks and [?] calves where the animals were found and they hunted the range for the critters.

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"[Ther?] entered the conflict, the persons who saw an opportunity to make some easy money and the result was open warfare in many sections of the country. That warfare lasted, more or less, until the fence appeared.

"I do not wholly blame the cowhand. He was a product of the open range, which was not the property of no one in particular. He fought to maintain his right as he had learned these to be. The old cowhand, as a whole, was a faithful and dependable worker, and a square dealer.

"The element that took advantage of the unsettled conditions never has ceased to be with us. The cattle thief is still following the trade. He no longer rides a hoss hunting for strays, or stampedes a herd to provide the strays. The thief today employes a truck and drives it on to the range. They cut a gap in the line fence and drives up to the herd. The white 7 face [?] stock are gentel, therefore easily loaded. It is only a few [nimutes?] work and the thief is off to his market. The market is some buyer who disregards to law and knowingly buys stolen property, because he can purchase the beef at a price below the market quotations.

"On my ranch I have two men steadily employed who do nothing else but ride the fence line watching for cut fence.

"No, it never has been all sunshine for the ranchman. with the [loss s?] to the rustlers, from stampedes, droughts and other causes, the cowman has fought many hard battles to keep going and there has been many who went under.

"I have weathered all the battles and am still engaged in the business. I now have a herd of 4,000 under the foremanship of Dan [Sanders?].

"I market all my stock in Texas markets. Fort Worth, is now my main market. I never did sell out side of the state. When others were making drives to the northern market, I sold to

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the drivers and figured then, and have not changed my mind, that I made money by doing so.

“Driving a herd to the early markets was an expensive proposition. It required a crew of 12 men to properly handle a herd on the drive. Their wages over a period of several months amounted to considerable, also the bill for supplies. On top of the money for help and supplies came the critter losses. The trail driver figures on around 10 percent loss from natural causes. Some times it would be less and again the loss would more. I have know of some instances where the driver 8 lost half of the herd. I sold to [?] other fellow and let him take the chances.

“During the last few [?] I have not given much attention to the business, because of my health, and have left things in the hands of others.